

# *Report*

# Haleakala National Park

## ■ 1.0 Site Description

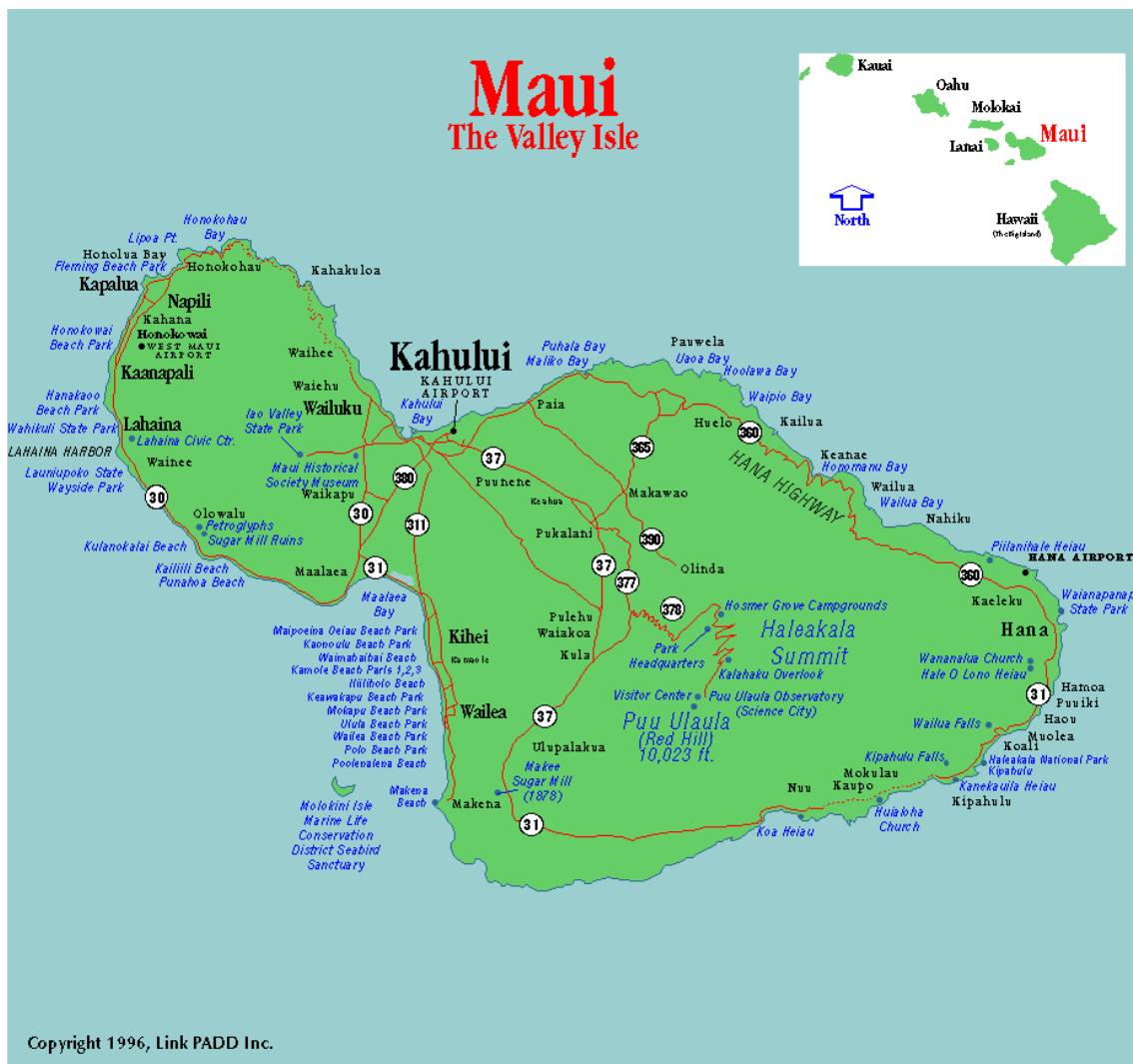
Haleakala National Park preserves the volcanic landscape of the upper slopes of Haleakala on the island of Maui. It is a protected area for the unique and fragile ecosystems of Kipahulu Valley, the scenic pools of Ohe'o, and is also the home to many rare and endangered species. The Park is 30,183 acres, 19,270 acres of which are designated wilderness.

Crater Road, the main road on the site, is a 10-mile road that runs from the Haleakala Headquarters to the crater overlook, which is the highest point on the island of Maui at 10,023 feet. The Park extends from the summit down the mountain to the Kipahulu coast near Hana.

The Park includes the Haleakala Visitor Center and the Kipahulu Ranger Station/Visitor Center, both of which have cultural and natural history exhibits. Near the summit, two trails lead into the wilderness: the Sliding Sands Trail and the Halemau'u Trail. Kipahulu district also has trails available for visitor use. Both areas of the Park offer guided walks and interpretive programs. Private tour companies offer downhill biking opportunities, horseback tours, and guided hikes. Sunrise and sunset viewing are perhaps the most popular activities at the Park, though bird and wildlife watching, as well as sky watching and stargazing are other popular activities. A recent addition to the Haleakala site is the Ka'apahu area. The Ka'apahu area contains a mile of ocean front, with old historic trails. Visitors may hike, visit waterfalls and pools, enjoy the beach, or view archeological artifacts at this site.

The park summit area receives 1.1 million visitors annually; the Kipahulu district receives approximately 600,000 visitors annually. Visitors arrive by auto, bus, van, or bike, and some arrive by vans or buses carrying bikes in order to ride down the hill on the bicycle. The heaviest visitation occurs during the early morning hours when the sun is rising, during which time there is traffic congestion and a shortage of parking. Weather affects visitation. Radio reports are given advising visitors of fog, rain or poor visibility. There is a range of visitation durations, given the variety of activities at the Park, but visitors are encouraged to spend at least two hours in the Park to drive up to the summit and back to the entrance, with additional time if hiking or interpretive programs are included.

Figure 1. Island of Maui



## ■ 2.0 Existing ATS

The Haleakala summit and the Kipahulu District are both served by commercial tour buses and vans and bicycle groups arriving in vehicles pulling trailers of bikes. The existence of several one-lane bridges along the Hana Highway limits bus and van size to 15- or 25-passenger vehicles.

### ■ 3.0 ATS Needs

- The 1995 General Management Plan recommends against expansion of parking lots, even though visitation continues to rise. There is a lack of parking at the summit parking areas as well as at the visitor center and at the Kipahulu district. Parking is also limited at an area recently acquired by the Park, the Ka'apahu area.
- The Park could accommodate more visitors, but not more cars. One potential solution to the anticipated increase in visitation and the shortage of parking area could be Alternative Transportation Systems (ATS). Park staff has suggested the use of a tram-type of vehicle to shuttle visitors from a parking area in the town of Kipahulu. A shuttle could also be used to transport visitors between Ka'apahu, the Haleakala summit area, and Kipahulu. The visitor center at the summit area is about 76 miles, or a three-hour drive away from the Kipahulu District. The Kipahulu District is about six miles away from the Ka'apahu District.

### ■ 4.0 Basis of ATS Needs

- The 1995 General Management Plan recommends against expansion of parking lots, even though visitation continues to rise. There is a lack of parking at the summit parking areas as well as at the visitor center and at the Kipahulu district. Parking is also limited at an area recently acquired by the Park, the Ka'apahu area.
- ATS would enhance the visitor experience, which is currently declining due to traffic congestion and difficult parking access.

### ■ 5.0 Bibliography

Haleakala National Park. Internet site: <http://www.nps.gov/hale/>. Information printed November 1999.

### ■ 6.0 Persons Interviewed

Donald W. Reeser, Superintendent, telephone interview, November 1999